

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 MC-02 ACDA-05 AID-05 OMB-01

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8550

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR,IN, US, PK, MASS

SUBJECT: INDO-US RELATIONS-RHETORIC DECLINES SLIGHTLY

REF: NEW DELHI 5200

SUMMARY: MRS. GANDHI HAS BALANCED HER EARLIER
TALK OF A "THREAT FROM THE OCEAN" AND HER CONTINUING
CRITICISM OF US POLICY TOWARDS INDO-CHINA AND
PAKISTAN WITH SOME POSITIVE REMARKS ABOUT WISHING TO
MAINTAIN RELATIONS WITH THE US. SOME, BUT NOT ALL OF HER
MINISTERS HAVE GOTTEN THE WORD. WE WILL WATCH AND SEE WHETHER
THIS STANDS UP WHEN SUBJECTED TO DOMESTIC POLITICAL DEMANDS.
END SUMMARY.

1. BEGINNING ABOUT TEN DAYS AGO, WITH HER DEPARTURE FOR
THE COMMONWEALTH PRIME MINISTERS' CONFERENCE IN KINGSTON,
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MRS. GANDHI HAS SPOKEN REPEATEDLY OF HER INTEREST IN MAIN-

TAINING RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES, DENIED CRITICIZING THE UNITED STATES AND SAID THAT SHE KNOWS NOTHING OF A POSSIBLE CANCELLATION OF PRESIDENT FORD'S VISIT. MOST OF THESE REMARKS HAVE COME IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS FROM INDIAN JOURNALISTS. DURING THE SAME PERIOD, SHE HAS NOT MENTIONED THE ALLEGED "THREAT FROM THE SEA," ALTHOUGH SHE HAS MENTIONED BASES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN. SHE HAS CONTINUED HER CRITICISM OF US POLICY IN INDO-CHINA AND OF US ARMS SUPPLIES TO PAKISTAN, BUT IN A LOWER-KEY. ALL OF THIS HAS OCCURRED WHILE SHE HAS BEEN IN DELHI OR OUTSIDE INDIA--SHE HASN'T BEEN OUT ON THE POLITICAL HUSTINGS, WHERE SHE FIRST RAISED THE CHARGE OF A THREAT FROM THE SEA.

2. HERE ARE A FEW EXAMPLES OF THE THINGS MRS. GANDHI HAS SAID ABOUT THE US: AT THE AIRPORT PRIOR TO HER DEPARTURE FOR KINGSTON APRIL 27, SHE REPORTEDLY TOLD THE PRESS, IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION ABOUT AMERICAN REACTION TO HER EARLIER STATEMENTS AND ABOUT THE POSSIBLE CANCELLATION OF PRESIDENT FORD'S VISIT, "I HAVE NO VIEW ON THIS. WE HAVE NOT CRITICIZED THE UNITED STATES. AS FOR MR. FORD'S VISIT, WE HAVE HEARD NOTHING TO THE CONTRARY. EARLIER, HE HAD SAID HE WOULD COME." (NEW DELHI 5666). THEN, ON MARCH 1 IN KINGSTON, SHE TOLD INDIAN JOURNALISTS, "WE WOULD PREFER THEM (THE UNITED STATES) NOT TO GIVE ARMS TO PAKISTAN AND WE HAVE MADE OUR POSITION VERY CLEAR THAT IT INCREASES TENSIONS, BUT I DON'T THINK THAT IS A REASON FOR US TO BREAK RELATIONS OR TAKE ANY SUCH EXTREMIST STEP." SHE REPORTEDLY ADDED THAT THERE WAS NO CHANGE IN THE GOI ATTITUDE ABOUT PRESIDENT FORD'S VISIT. (NEW DELHI 5929.) ON HER RETURN FROM KINGSTON MAY 3, SHE REPORTEDLY REPEATED THAT SHE HAD NOT CRITICIZED THE UNITED STATES OR ANYBODY; SHE HAD ONLY GIVEN HER ASSESSMENT BUT SHE HAD BEEN MISREPRESENTED. (EARLIER, IN AN APRIL 8 INTERVIEW WITH DUTCH TV RELEASED APRIL 27, SHE SAID, "WE SINCERELY HOPE THE RELATIONSHIP WITH AMERICA WILL CONTINUE TO IMPROVE. IN AN IN AN INTERVIEW WITH A LEBANESE JOURNALIST THE SAME DAY, ALSO RELEASED APRIL 27, SHE SAID INDO-US RELATIONS WERE "GOOD". IN BOTH INTERVIEWS SHE MENTIONED US ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FAVORABLY. (SEE NEW DELHI 5666 AND 5748)

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3. INDO-CHINA, PAKISTAN AND THE INDIAN OCEAN: AT THE COMMONWEALTH PRIME MINISTER'S CONFERENCE, MRS. GANDHI SAID THAT DEVELOPMENTS IN INDI-CHINA STEMMED FROM AMERICAN "MIS-CONCEPTIONS AND WRONG ASSESSMENTS" AND ITS POLICY OF PROPPING UP UNREPRESENTATIVE REGIMES. SHE CALLED THE PRG VICTORY THE LOGICAL SUCCESS OF ASIAN NATIONALISM. ON PAKISTAN, SHE SAID THAT IT WAS NOT THE QUANTUM OF US ARMS WHICH MATTERED, BUT THE FACT THAT THE US CONTINUED TO HOLD

THE ERRONEOUS BELIEF THAT SUCH AN ARMS DEAL CONTRIBUTED TO STABILITY IN THE AREA. THE TIMING OF THE DEAL WAS ALSO SINGULARLY UNFORTUNATE. LATER, SHE TOLD THE AP IN KINGSTON THAT THE LIFTING OF THE EMBARGO "QUEERED OUR PITCH" JUST AS INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN WERE IMPROVING. SHE REPORTEDLY SAID THAT THE US STILL "PERSISTS IN EQUATING PAKISTAN WITH INDIA"; THIS WAS THE SORT OF MISTAKEN ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION THAT THE AMERICANS HAD MADE IN INDO-CHINA. ON THE INDIAN OCEAN, SHE REPORTEDLY DREW ATTENTION OF THE KINGSTON CONFERENCE TO NEW MILITARY BASES COMING UP IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AND SAID, "WE ARE AGAINST ALL FOREIGN BASES."

4. WHAT OTHER INDIAN LEADERS HAVE BEEN SAYING:

A. DEFENSE MINISTER SWARAN SINGH IN HIS POLICY STATEMENTS TO PARLIAMENT APRIL 21 AND 28 REFERRED ONLY BRIEFLY AND MILDLY TO THE NEED TO PROTECT INDIA'S COASTLINE. IN HIS DISCUSSION WITH THE NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE GROUP MAY 1, SWARAN SINGH SAID THE PRESS IN BOTH COUNTRIES SOMETIMES PRINTED STATEMENTS OUT OF CONTEXT; HE SAID THAT THESE SORTS OF

INCIDENTS WOULD NOT CREATE OVERSENSITIVITY OR BUILD A WALL OF RESENTMENT AND MISUNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, HE REFERRED TO THE US AND INDIA AS THE WORLD'S TWO LARGEST DEMOCRACIES, AND REJECTED THE IDEA THAT US PRESTIGE HAD FALLEN AS A RESULT OF THE WITHDRAWAL FROM VIETNAM.

DAO MSG 212 MAY 75 NOTAL).

B. FOREIGN MINISTER CHAVAN IN KINGSTON MAY 5 APPARENTLY SPOKE OUT IN SUPPORT OF THE INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE PROPOSAL BUT DID NOT SAY THERE WAS A "THREAT" TO INDIA. HE REPORTEDLY SAID THAT OLD BASES WERE BEING STRENGTHENED AND NEW ONES WERE RISING. THIS WAS OF GRAVE CONCERN TO THE LITTORAL STATES BECAUSE IT

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WOULD SPUR AN ARMS RACE IN THE REGION AND CREATE DANGEROUS TENSIONS.

C. MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING I.K. GUJRAL, REPORTEDLY TOLD THE DELHI STATE ANTI-FASCIST CONFERENCE MAY 4; THAT FORCES WORKING AGAINST MRS. GANDHI WERE ADOPTING THE SAME TECHNIQUES AS USED IN CHILE AGAINST ALLENDE. MRS. GANDHI WAS WORKING TO STRENGTHEN THE COUNTRY, BUT IT DID NOT SUIT THE "IMPERIALIST FORCES TO SEE INDIA BECOME A STRICT NATION UNDER HER LEADERSHIP. "WE HAVE TO FRUSTRATE THEIR EFFORTS; THE PEOPLE OF INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE REGION MUST BE ALERT TO SUCH MOVES," RE REPORTEDLY SAID.

D. HOME MINISTER BRAHMANANDA REDDY REPORTEDLY TOLD THE

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INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

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PARLIAMENTARY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE FOR HOME AFFAIRS IN A
CLOSED SESSION MAY 5 THAT "THE THREAT TO THE SECURITY OF
INDIA BY EXTERNAL AGGRESSION STILL CONTINUES, NOT ONLY ON
OUR LAND FRONTIERS BUT ALSO ALONG OUR EXTENSIVE SEACOAST."

5. COMMENT: THE PRIME MINISTER HAS CLEARLY BALANCED
HER CRITICISM WITH SOME POSITIVE COMMENTS ABOUT
INDO-US RELATIONS. THE PRESS SPOKESMAN OF THE FOREIGN
MINISTRY HAS REPEATEDLY AND POINTEDLY DRAWN OUR ATTENTION
TO THESE REMARKS. NOR HAVE THEY GONE UNNOTICED IN INDIA --
THE EDITOR OF THE INDIAN EXPRESS WROTE IN HIS COLUMN MAY 7
THAT MRS. GANDHI "HAS IN HER OWN WAY TRIED TO SAY 'SORRY'."
MRS. GANDHI HAS HERSELF SHIFTED FROM REFERENCES TO "THE
THREAT FROM THE SEA" AND CONCENTRATED INSTEAD ON THE LIFTING OF
OUR ARMS EMBARGO WHEN DISCUSSING US POLICY IN THE IMMEDIATE
AREA. BUT EVEN THE LATTER COMMENTS ARE NOW LESS ALARMIST AND
ARE SIMILAR TO THOSE MADE BY THE GOI WHEN OUR ARMS POLICY WAS
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CHANGED. SOME OF MRS. GANDHI'S MINISTERS AND POLITICAL ADVISORS HAVE GOTTEN THE MESSAGE (CONGRESS PRESIDENT BAROOAH HAS NOT REPEATED HIS SAVAGE REMARKS OF TWO WEEKS AGO, REPORTED IN NEW DELHI 5557, BUT NOT ALL OF THEM.

6. ATTACKING THE US HAS BEEN AN ATTRACTIVE AND CONVENIENT LINE TO USE ON THE POLITICAL ROSTRUM. IT HAS ALSO COME NATURALLY WHEN THE PLATFORM HAS BEEN PROVIDED BY A PRO-SOVIET FRONT ORGANIZATION. THERE ARE SEVERAL SUCH MEETINGS COMING UP. (FOREXAMPLE, THE PUBLIC MEETINGS TO CELEBRATE THE SOVIET VICTORY THIS WEEK AND THE MAY 15-16 "NATIONAL CONVENTION AGAINST DANGERS OF FASCISM" BEING SPONSORED BY AN ASSORTMENT OF CONGRESS MPS, INCLUDING SOME QUITE "RESPONSIBLE" ONES).. THE ELECTION FEVER IN THE GUJARAT STATE ELECTIONS IS RISING AND DOZENS OF POLITICIANS AND MINISTERS WILL BE MAKING SPEECHES IN THAT STATE IN THE COMING MONTH.

7. THERE IS ALSO THE ELEMENT OF PAKISTAN. SOME NEWSMEN AND A FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL (NEW DELHI 5994) HAVE SUGGESTED - THAT THE UPSWING IN "THREAT" SPEECHES PARALLELED A SERIES OF PRETTY EMPHATIC BHUTTO SPEECHES IN PAKISTAN DIRECTED AGAINST THE "THREAT" FROM INDIA AND THAT THESE MAY HAVE ELICITED PARALLEL STATEMENTS FROM THE INDIAN SIDE. NOW THAT THAT PERIOD SEEMS TO HAVE DIED DOWN, INDIAN RHETORIC, WHICH UNFORTUNATELY GETS WRAPPED UP WITH US-PAK TIES, HAS ALSO BECOME MORE RESTRAINED AND PROBABLY WILL STAY SO IN THE PERIOD BEFORE AND DURING THE IMPENDING VISIT OF PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN SECRETARY HERE BEGINNING MAY 15.

7. WHERE WE CAME OUT ON ALL THIS IS THAT THE TEMPERATURE HAS COOLED DOWN, AND WE SEE SOME SIGNS THAT THE INDIANS IN THE LAST TWO WEEKS HAVE MADE AN EFFORT TO MAKE IT HAPPEN. WE WILL CONTINUE OUR WATCH IN THE WEEKS AHEAD.

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